

EXHIBIT L

West Point Diversity Conference addresses progress, challenges in way ahead

By Mike Strasser, West Point Pointer View April 16, 2010

The Army defines diversity as "the different attributes, experiences and backgrounds of our Soldiers, civilians and Family members who further enhance our global capabilities and contribute to an adaptive, culturally astute Army."

Advancing diversity was the focus of the 11th annual West Point Diversity Leadership Conference April 7-9, with a series of speakers and panel discussions addressing the way forward on this topic.

Andre Sayles, deputy director of the Army Diversity Office and conference co-chairperson, said the Army's vision extends not just to recruiting and retaining a robust ethnic workforce, but one which attracts other attributes. Gender, age and even experience are all components of diversity.

Using West Point as an example, Sayles mentioned the Soldier Admission program, which encourages more prior-service Soldiers, with rich fields of experience, to apply to military academies.

Experience is gained within the academy as well, Sayles said, with cadets benefitting from the Semester Abroad or other cultural immersion programs.

Lt. Gen. Buster Hagenbeck, West Point superintendent, addressed the academy's advancement in diversifying its Corps of Cadets through national exposure, citing last year's ESPN coverage of West Point on Veterans Day and the college ranking article in "Forbes" magazine. Sports and entertainment, he said, are what West Point candidates find most interesting. Leveraging these opportunities to showcase West Point has reaped dividends in recruiting, as indicated in the class composition percentages.

"Admissions for the Class of 2014 have gone up dramatically," Hagenbeck said. "A 12 percent increase in applications, with 25 percent increase in African-Americans, 26 percent in Hispanics ... we really do get the best and brightest and we're pleased with that."

Reaching those faraway towns and cities is the mission of the academy's Minority Admissions Office, headed by Maj. Michael Burns and his staff.

Col. Deborah McDonald, director of admissions, mentioned the recent Minority Educator visit and Congressional Staff visits as ways of providing information to those who can assist potential West Point candidates.

McDonald cited increases in the numbers of female and African American admissions in the Class of 2013 and a promising outlook for the Class of 2014. However, having never reached the composition goals for African-American or prior-service cadets means there is still much work to be done.

A couple of years ago, every qualified African-American applicant were offered admission into West Point, yet the class composition goal was still lacking, McDonald said. Therefore, success can be measured when there are enough qualified candidates to have their names added to the national waiting list.

Burns joined a diversity panel to include Maj. Brian Easley, Soldier Admissions Officer; Cow Devin Adams; Meg Gordon, Class of 1984 graduate and mother of a Class of 2013 cadet; and Wal-Mart Stores Regional General Manager Noah Johnson.

The panel offered unique perspectives about reaching out to those who influence the futures of the youth population.

Brig. Gen. Michael Garrett, U.S. Army Recruiting Command deputy commanding general, showed a short video clip about socialnomics-the saturation of social media in everyday life-to prove the point that the youth market is more technologically savvy than ever before.

The conference was co-hosted by the U.S. Military Academy and the Diversity Leadership Council of the West Point Association of Graduates.

Among the invited guest speakers this year were Ambassador Swanee Hunt, Th.D., and Frances Hesselbein, chairman of the Board of Governors and Chief Justice Carolyn Wright, Texas' Fifth District Court of Appeals.

Last year's conference unveiled an Army policy memorandum calling for the Army to be the "national leader in embracing the strengths of diverse people in an inclusive environment."

Col. Bryan Goda, conference co-chairperson said the conference attendance totaled 350, coupled with the great level of corporate sponsorship, making this the largest conference in its 11-year history.

"I think the message of diversity was well-received by the participants, and I've heard nothing but praise," Goda said.